

A User's Participatory Selecting Model: Librarians Point of Views

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Abstract

The concept of users participating in the selection of library materials has been around for some time but in recent years, with the introduction in the market by publishers of extensive eBook collections and the better technology for moving records from publishers' files to online catalogs, new opportunities for patron-based selection have emerged. This paper presents the results of a survey of academic librarians in the state of Illinois, USA done with the object of determining their professional perspectives about this kind of service. The results indicate that when used properly, participatory selecting models for patrons can support the overall collection development efforts, but they are not a substitute.

Introduction

The Illinois Association for College and Research Libraries sponsored at the 2011 Illinois Library Association Annual Meeting the session "Patron Driven Acquisitions: Is it Time to Re-think Processes for Academic Title Selection?" which was part of the Collection Management and Development program's track. At this panel the three speakers: Nancy Crow from Quincy University; Nestor L. Osorio from Northern Illinois University; and Lynn Wiley from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign presented an overview of "the models libraries are using to solicit input from patrons on title selection, the pros and cons of patron-driven acquisition on collection development, the efficacy of traditional vs. patron driven models, and finding the balance that works for the future." This paper is based on the presentation of the author at this session.

Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) has become a topic of discussion at recent meetings of library associations, several articles have been recently published and a book on the subject is appearing in early 2012 (Nixon et al., 2011). Anderson et al. (2010) discuss the Book on Demand program of the Purdue University Libraries which has been operating since 2000. In this program, books requested through interlibrary loan were purchased rather than being borrowed from other libraries. It is a program that provides valuable information into the collection process, especially from graduate students.

The findings of a pilot project between the University of York library and Springer are described by Thompson (2010). A user-driven purchasing model was put in place with the purpose of testing an alternative pricing model for the acquisition of e-Book collections. As indicated by Macicak and Schell (2009) the pay-per-view (PPV) for the selection of eBooks adopted at the University of Texas Libraries has provided them, after two years of being in place, with valuable information about how eBook collections can be built into hybrid collections, the change in responsibilities of the subject librarians, and how the eBook collections selection can interrelate with traditional paper-based approval plans.

In these three cases, the participating role in the selection process is an important an innovative component for their success but also play an important new strategic opportunity for outreach activities.

Establishing new direct connections between the users and the Library is also essential for the academic libraries to continue to be an important component in the research and teaching functions of the university, therefore these types of selection models are part of the public services activities.

The purpose of the survey was to investigate the current practices in libraries and perceptions of front-line librarians about Patron-Driven Acquisition in the academic libraries of the state of Illinois, USA. Therefore, this survey was intended for librarians active in reference and collection development from universities, community and junior colleges in Illinois.

Methodology

There have been other reports of surveys about e-Book collections; the Duke University Press (2011) survey of library e-book acquisitions had a response of 33% (265 responses), covering a broad spectrum of basic issues concerning the adoption of eBook collections in academic libraries. Lenares and Delquie (2011) report about a survey developed by the Publishers Communication Group that provides consulting services for scholarly publishers; it is a survey about PDA acceptance and plans in academic libraries. The elements included in this survey (questions and format) were similar to the design used by others investigating eBooks and PDA. The selection of the use of acceptable terms included in the survey was carefully taken into consideration as well its organization. Another source of information used was the article by Evans et al. (2009) which give some insights about the appropriate design of surveys using commercial software such as SurveyMonkey.com.

As indicated by the literature, one major task was to identify important persistent issues about PDA, with the object of presenting them to the community of academic librarians in Illinois. The survey, as the title of this article implies, was intended to get the opinion of librarians, preferably front-line librarians who are in contact with patrons on a daily basis and also are involved in collection development. It is more like an opinion poll of a topic of interest and of great currency, therefore it was not intended to be rigorous research. Nevertheless, the questions included represent issues such as the role of academic librarians in the selection process that could impact the future in the professional life of academic librarians.

Creating a pool of participants that target the specific desired population was a challenging process. As soon as the author started finding a way to identify the target audience, it was realized that with the available sources it was not easy to reach out a large number of librarians through the state of Illinois for an online survey. The professional organizations such as the Illinois Library Association (ILA), the Illinois Association for College and Research Libraries (IACRL) and Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois CARLI did not have the databank of email address needed for this project. Therefore, it was necessary to create a mailing list of librarians based on libraries that are consortium members of the CARLI system. The institutional membership of CARLI covers over 94% of Illinois higher education and has 153 member institutions. Emails were collected from all major public and private universities and from a random selected number of community and junior colleges. In total 75 institutions were included.

Building the mailing list database was a tedious and time-consuming process because it was necessary to visit each Library web site, find the list of staff or the departments for each of them. Once there, those people that were identified as reference librarians, subject librarians, public services librarians, collection development librarians, and the like were selected. It was also taken into consideration that in some small libraries, the Director is sometimes involved in some of these activities. Administrators in small libraries that perform duties of the target audience were included. The mailing list contained a total of 500 e-mail addresses (that was the only data collected from the respondents of the survey). The number of responses

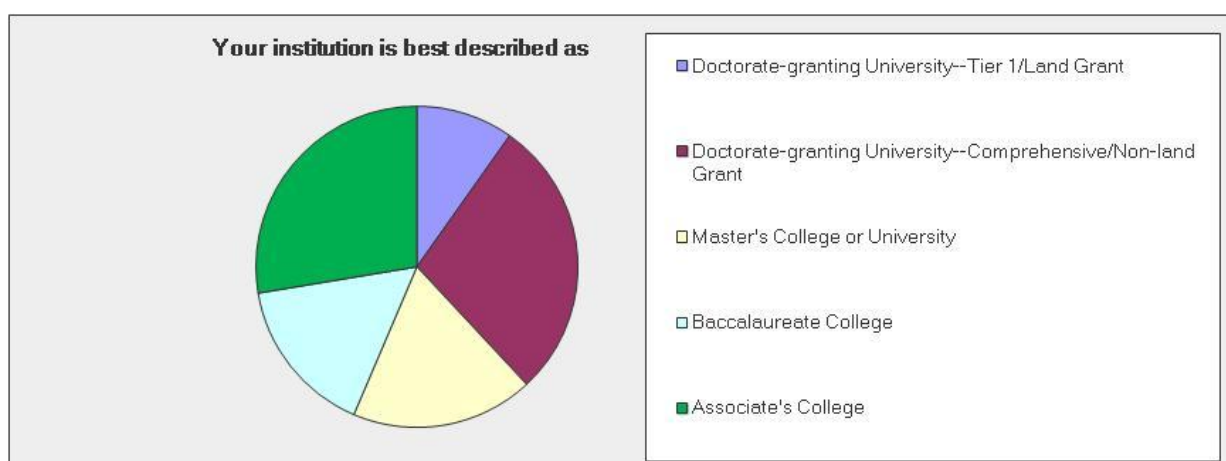
was 165 or 33 percent. The survey has 4 sections: 1. Introduction, 2. General Information, 3. Your Institution's Practices regarding PDA, 4. Your own Professional Concerns and Expectations about PDA.

Results

In this section, the results of the survey are presented. To simplify the data, information collected in the survey from librarians classified as Doctorate-granting University - tie 1/Land Grant and from Doctorate-granting University - Comprehensive/ Non Land Grant were summarized in one group as Doctorate-granting University. The results are divided into three areas: 1. Totals, 2. Comparisons, and 3. Comments. Totals referred to the totals obtained for each question. Comparisons are the data found that can compared results from the three types of institutions (Doctorate, Masters, Baccalaureate, and Associate). Comments are group by questions and subdivided into the types of institutions (D, M, B, and A).

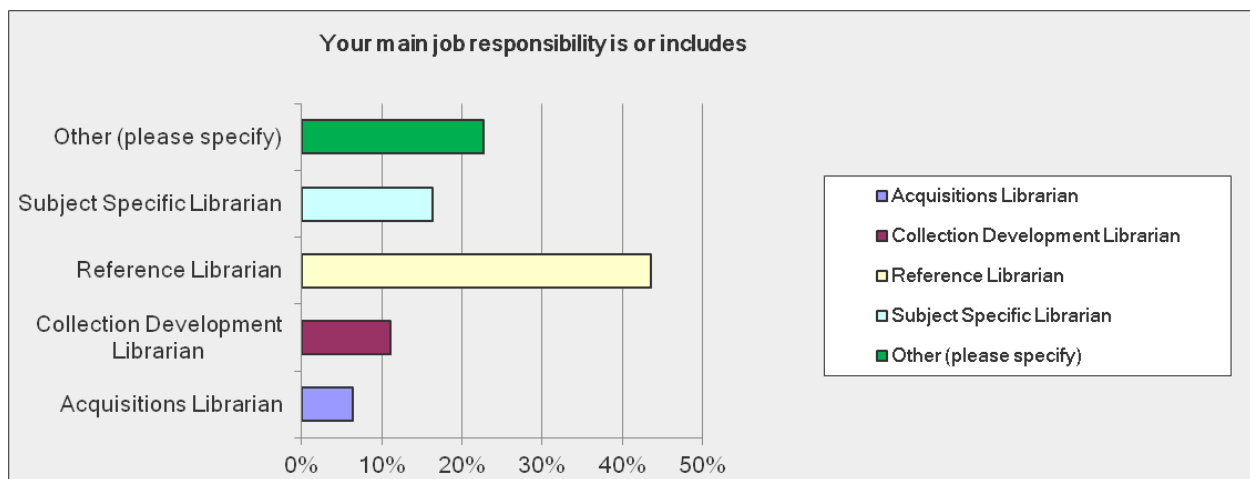
Question 1 Totals

Your institution is best described as		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Doctorate-granting University--Tier 1/Land Grant	9.82%	16
Doctorate-granting University--Comprehensive/Non-land	28.22%	46
Master's College or University	18.40%	30
Baccalaureate College	15.95%	26
Associate's College	27.61%	45



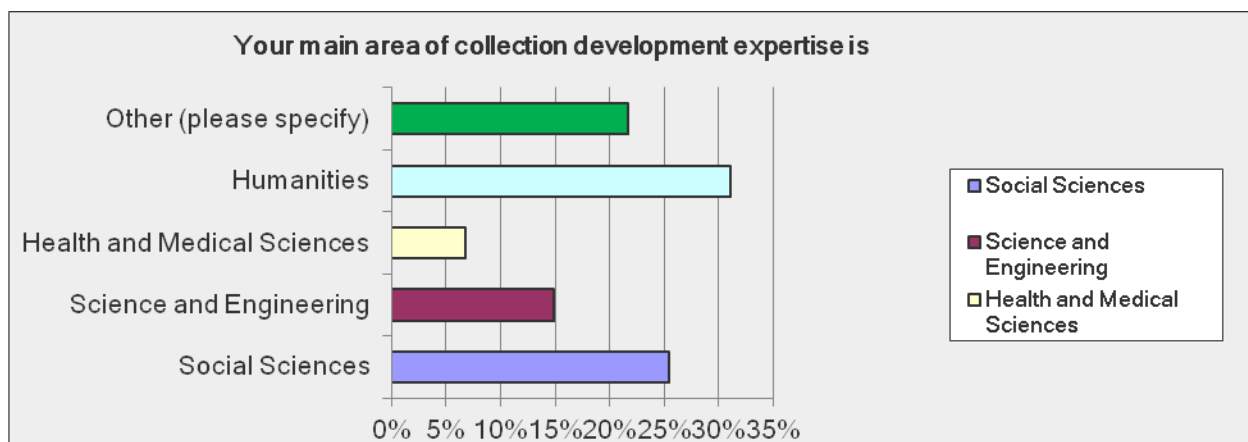
Question 2 Totals

Your main job responsibility is or includes		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Acquisitions Librarian	6.40%	11
Collection Development Librarian	11.05%	19
Reference Librarian	43.60%	75
Subject Specific Librarian	16.28%	28
Other (please specify)	22.67%	39



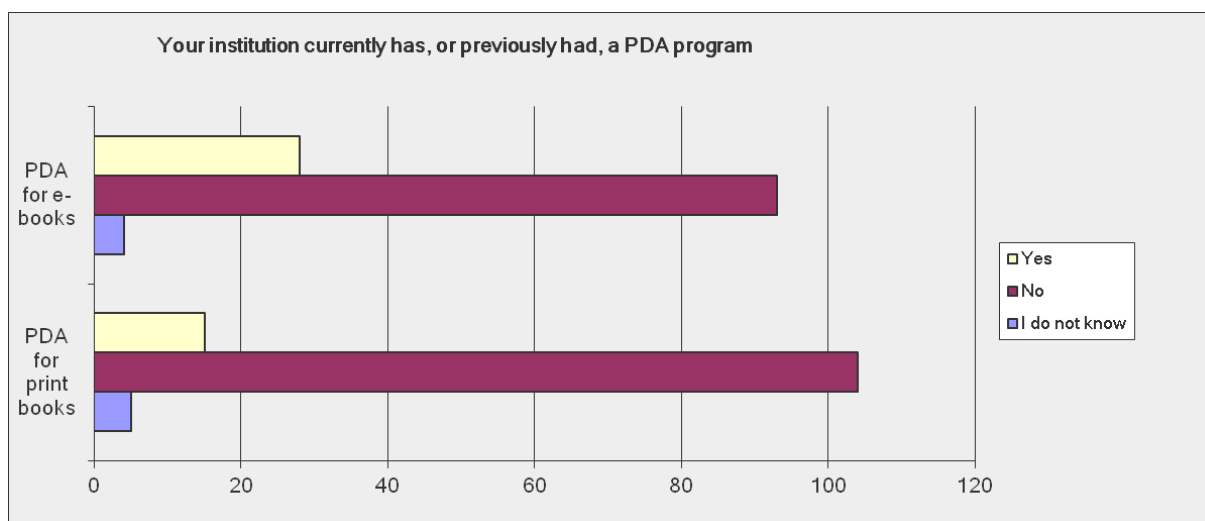
Question 3 Totals

Your main area of collection development expertise is		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Social Sciences	25.47%	41
Science and Engineering	14.91%	24
Health and Medical Sciences	6.83%	11
Humanities	31.06%	50
Other (please specify)	21.74%	35



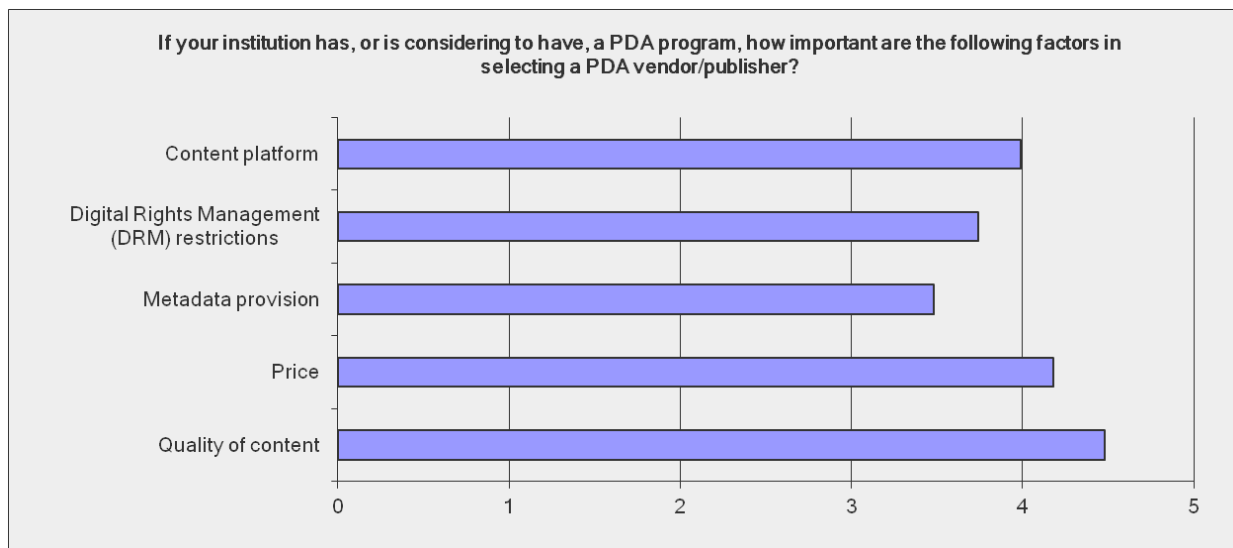
Question 4 Totals

Your institution currently has, or previously had, a PDA program		
Answer Options	Yes	No
PDA for print books	15	104
PDA for e-books	28	93



Question 5 Totals

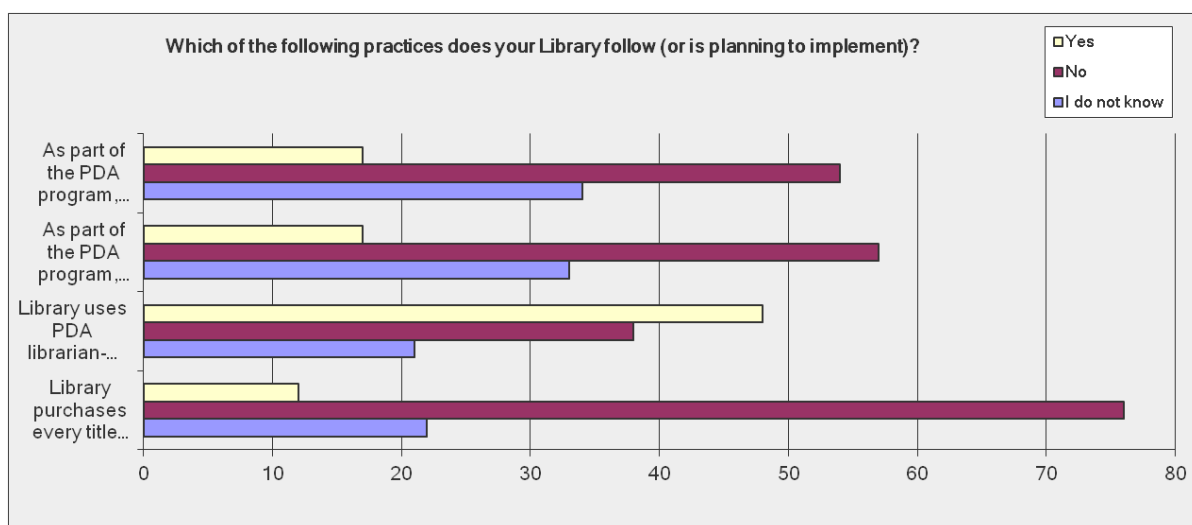
If your institution has, or is considering to have, a PDA program, how important are the following factors in selecting a PDA vendor/publisher?								
Answer Options	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Very Important	Unimportant	I do not know	Rating Average	Response Count
Quality of content	76	23	1	0	0	6	4.48	106
Price	47	48	4	0	0	6	4.18	105
Metadata provision	21	55	11	2	0	15	3.48	104
Digital Rights Management (DRM) restrictions	36	42	12	4	1	10	3.74	105
Content platform	36	51	9	0	0	7	3.99	103



Question 6 Totals

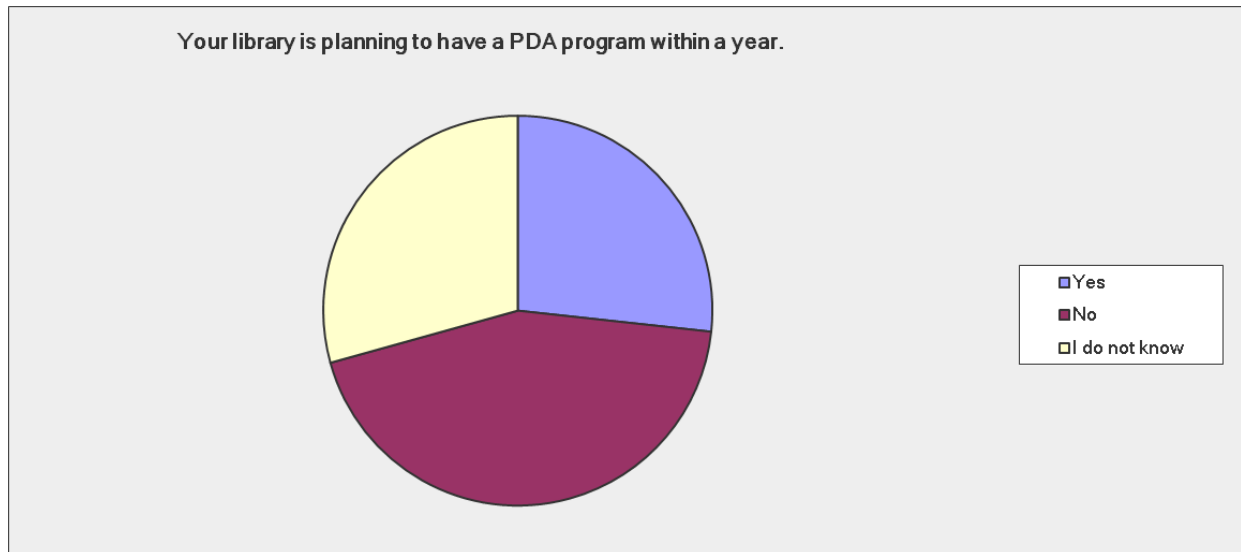
Which of the following practices does your Library follow (or is planning to implement)?

Answer Options	Yes	No	I do not know	Response Count
Library purchases every title selected by patrons	12	76	22	110
Library uses PDA librarian-mediated selection process	48	38	21	107
As part of the PDA program, library purchases e-copies of	17	57	33	107
As part of the PDA program, library purchases e-copies of	17	54	34	105



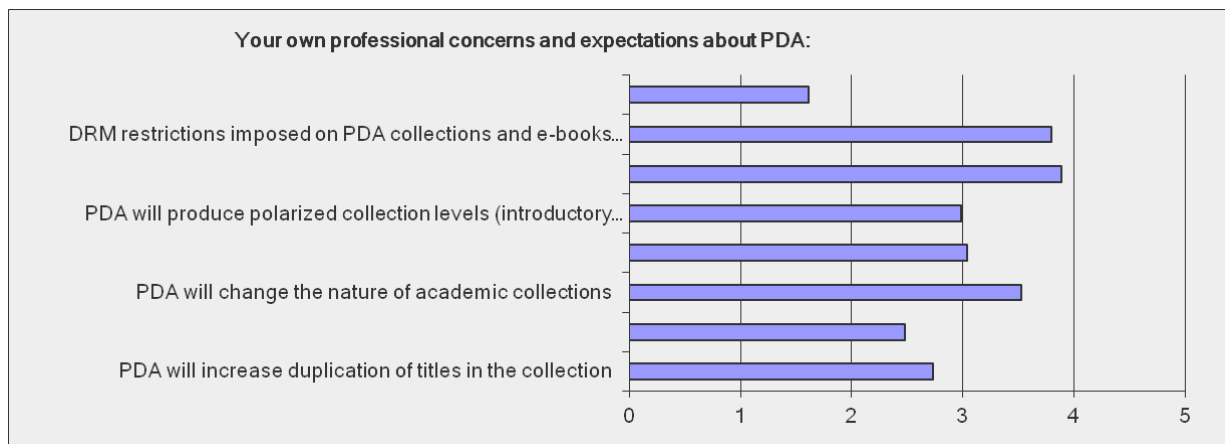
Question 8 Totals

Your library is planning to have a PDA program within a year.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	26.72%	31
No	43.97%	51
I do not know	29.31%	34



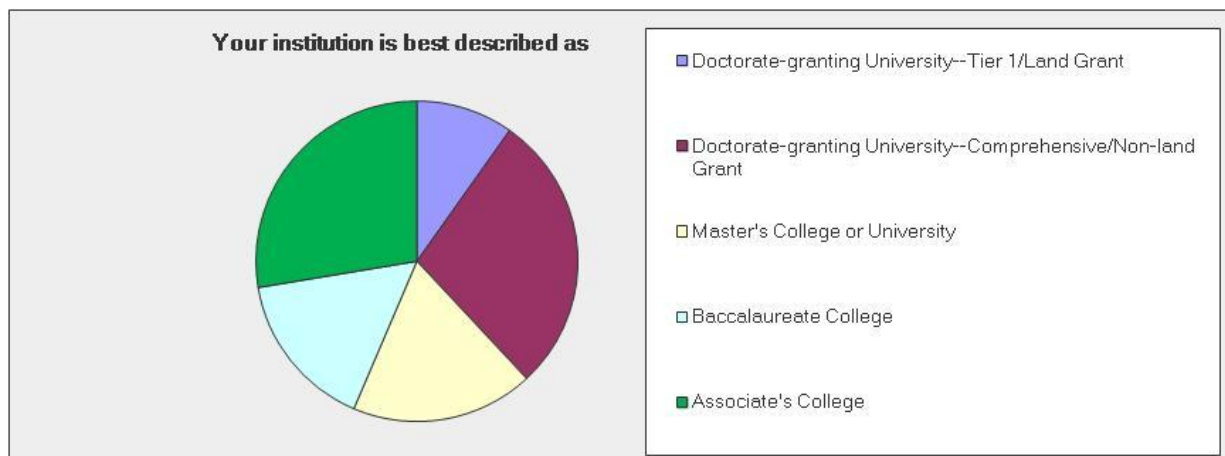
Question 9 Totals

Your own professional concerns and expectations about PDA:							
Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Rating Average	Response Count
PDA will increase duplication of titles in the collection	10	42	39	30	0	2.74	121
PDA is needed because lower-level undergraduates are underserved	16	47	42	14	1	2.48	120
PDA will change the nature of academic collections	3	14	33	58	13	3.53	121
PDA will produce unbalanced collections	3	35	45	30	8	3.04	121
PDA will produce polarized collection levels (introductory works vs. narrow research works)	7	31	45	29	7	2.98	119
PDA efforts should be limited to complementing regular collection development activities	0	12	20	58	30	3.88	120
DRM restrictions imposed on PDA collections and e-books collections in general are a serious concern	2	7	35	44	31	3.80	119
Collection development is an obsolete practice	68	37	9	5	1	1.62	120



Question 1 Comparisons

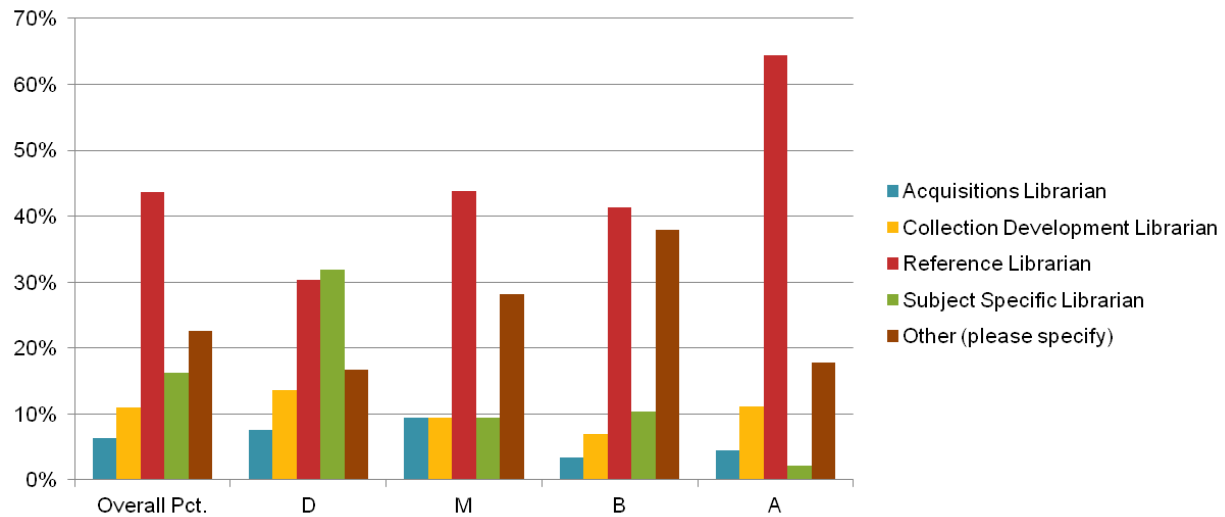
Your institution is best described as		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Doctorate-granting University--Tier 1/Land Grant	9.82%	16
Doctorate-granting University--Comprehensive/Non-land	28.22%	46
Master's College or University	18.40%	30
Baccalaureate College	15.95%	26
Associate's College	27.61%	45



Question 2 Comparisons

Your main job responsibility is or includes

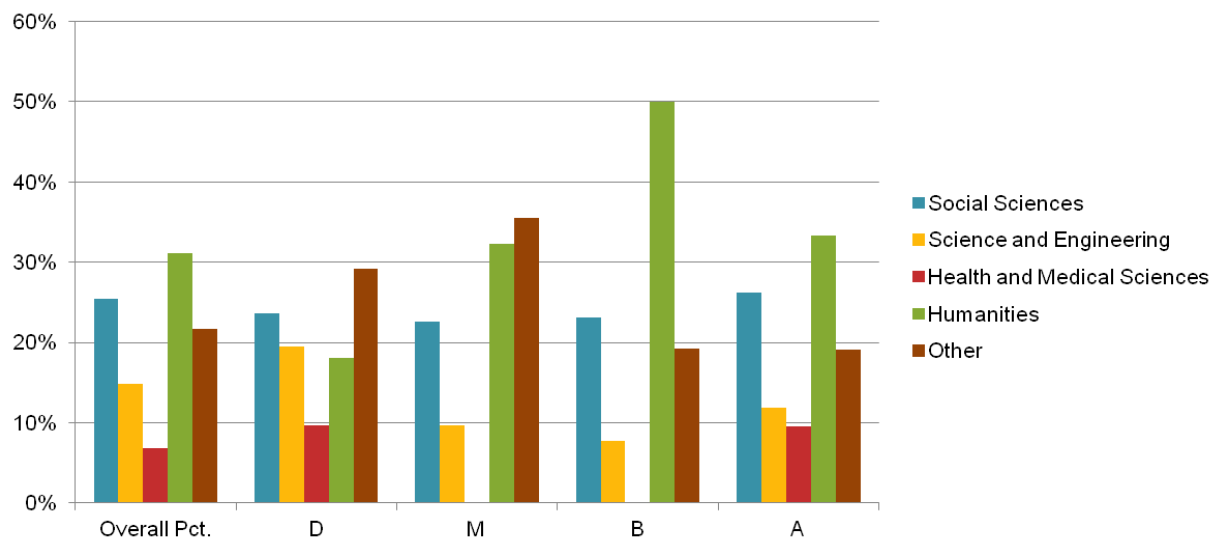
Answer Options	Overall Pct.	D	M	B	A
Acquisitions Librarian	6.40%	7.58%	9.38%	3.45%	4.44%
Collection Development Librarian	11.05%	13.64%	9.38%	6.90%	11.11%
Reference Librarian	43.60%	30.30%	43.75%	41.38%	64.44%
Subject Specific Librarian	16.28%	31.82%	9.38%	10.34%	2.22%
Other (please specify)	22.67%	16.67%	28.13%	37.93%	17.78%



Question 3 Comparisons

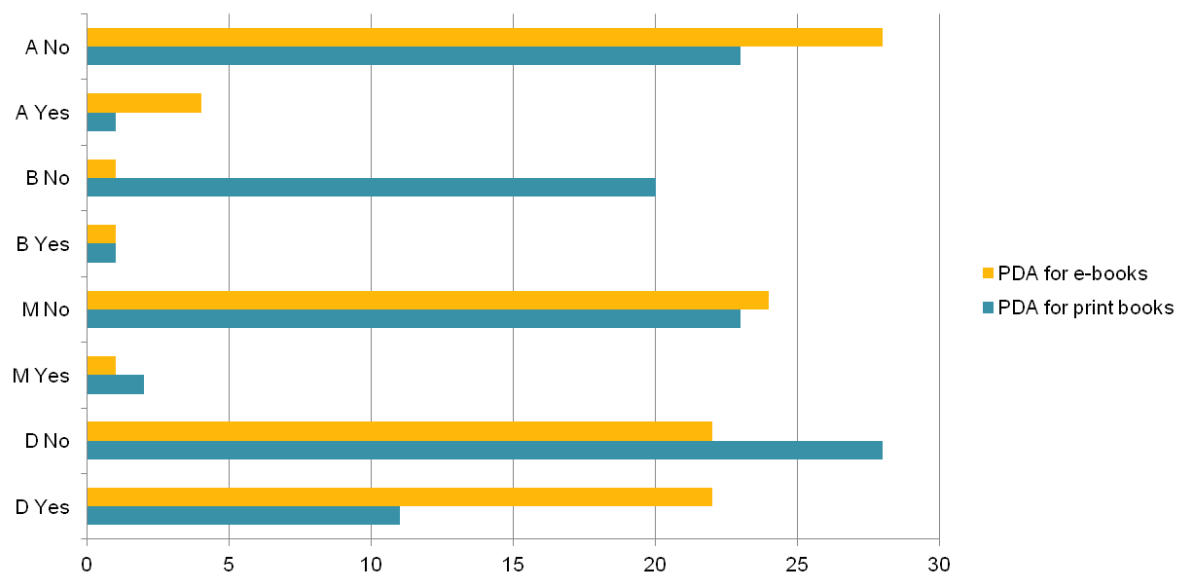
Your main area of collection development expertise is

Answer Options	Overall Pct.	D	M	B	A
Social Sciences	25.47%	23.61%	22.58%	23.08%	26.19%
Science and Engineering	14.91%	19.44%	9.68%	7.69%	11.90%
Health and Medical Sciences	6.83%	9.72%	0.00%	0.00%	9.52%
Humanities	31.06%	18.06%	32.26%	50.00%	33.33%
Other	21.74%	29.17%	35.48%	19.23%	19.05%



Question 4 Comparisons

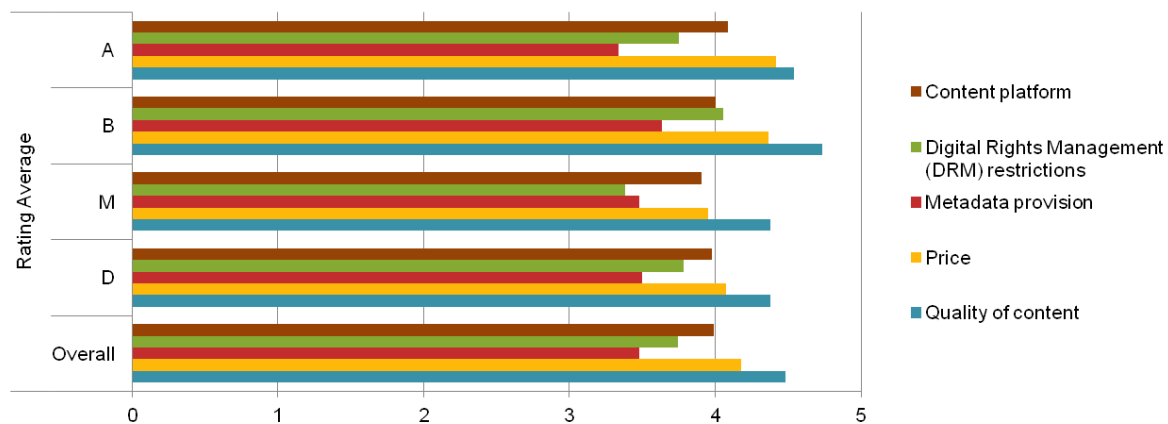
Your institution currently has, or previously had, a PDA program								
Answer Options	D Yes	D No	M Yes	M No	B Yes	B No	A Yes	A No
PDA for print books	11	28	2	23	1	20	1	23
PDA for e-books	22	22	1	24	1	1	4	28



Question 5 Comparisons

If your institution has, or is considering to have, a PDA program, how important are the following factors in selecting a PDA vendor/publisher?

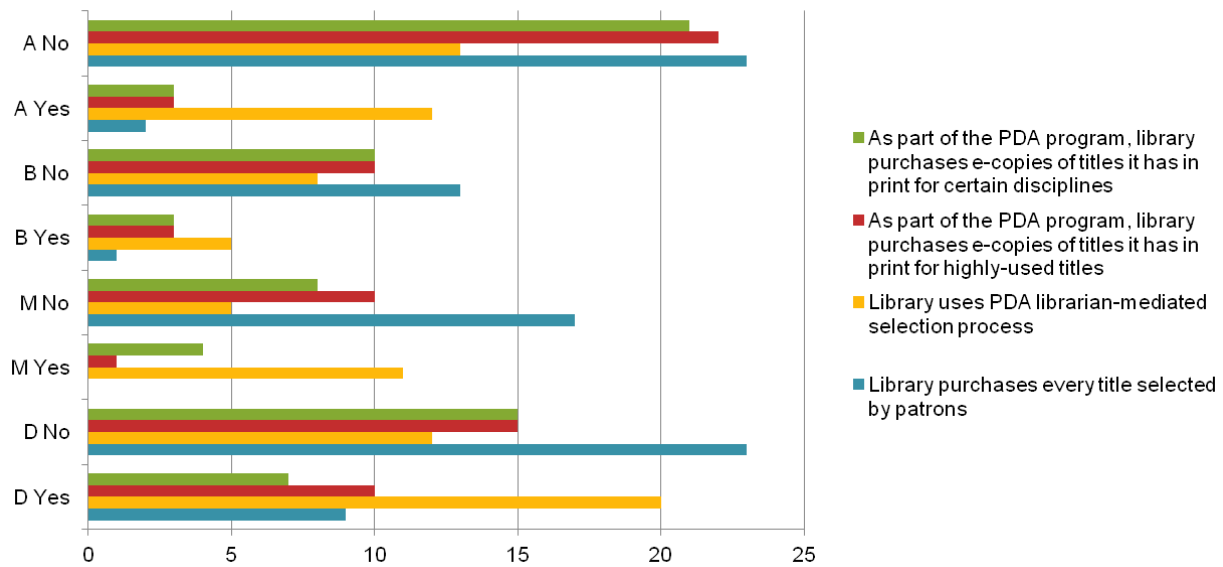
Answer Options	Rating Average				
	Overall	D	M	B	A
Quality of content	4.48	4.38	4.38	4.74	4.54
Price	4.18	4.07	3.95	4.37	4.42
Metadata provision	3.48	3.50	3.48	3.63	3.33
Digital Rights Management (DRM)	3.74	3.78	3.38	4.05	3.75
Content platform	3.99	3.98	3.90	4.00	4.09



Question 6 Comparisons

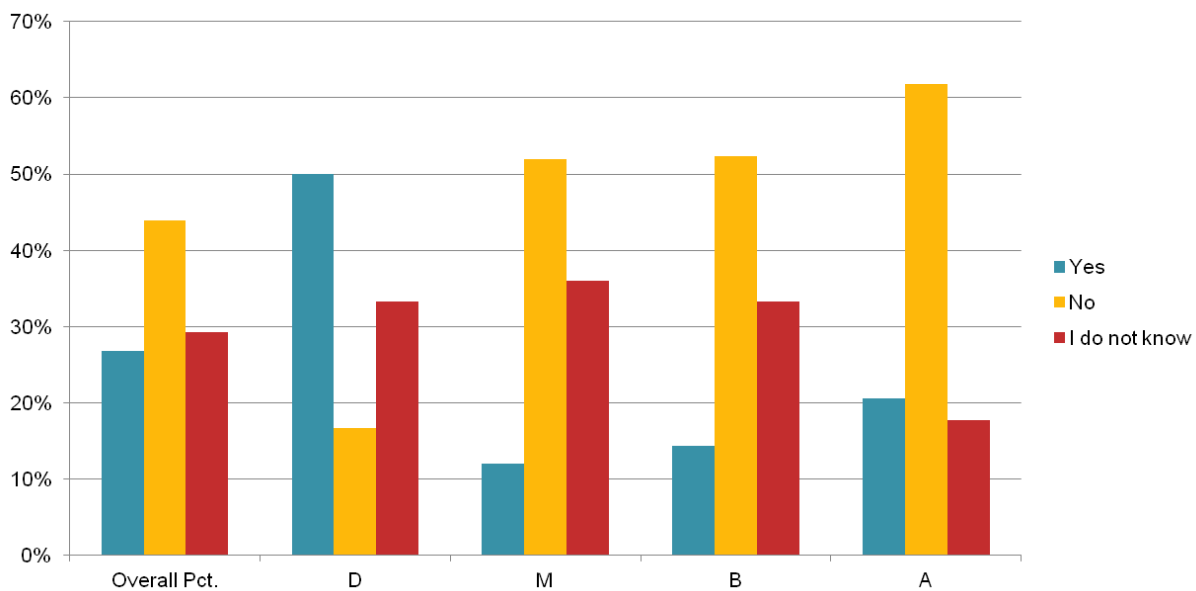
Which of the following practices does your Library follow (or is planning to implement)?

Answer Options	D Yes	D No	M Yes	M No	B Yes	B No	A Yes	A No
Library purchases every title selected by patrons	9	23	0	17	1	13	2	23
Library uses PDA librarian-mediated selection process	20	12	11	5	5	8	12	13
As part of the PDA program, library purchases e-copies of titles it has in print for highly-used titles	10	15	1	10	3	10	3	22
As part of the PDA program, library purchases e-copies of titles it has in print for certain disciplines	7	15	4	8	3	10	3	21



Question 8 Comparisons

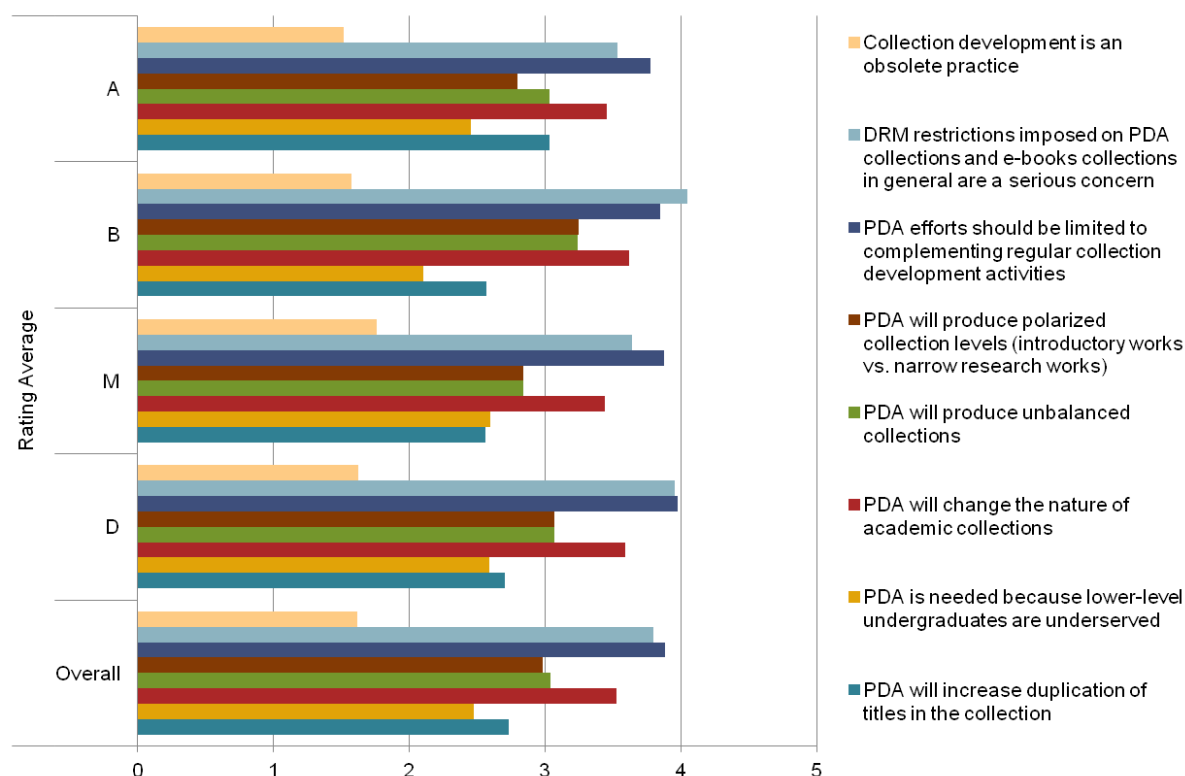
Your library is planning to have a PDA program within a year.					
Answer Options	Overall Pct.	D	M	B	A
Yes	26.72%	50.00%	12.00%	14.29%	20.59%
No	43.97%	16.67%	52.00%	52.38%	61.76%
I do not know	29.31%	33.33%	36.00%	33.33%	17.65%



Question 9 Comparisons

Your own professional concerns and expectations about PDA:

Answer Options	Rating Average				
	Overall	D	M	B	A
PDA will increase duplication of titles in the collection	2.74	2.70	2.56	2.57	3.03
PDA is needed because lower-level undergraduates are underserved	2.48	2.59	2.60	2.10	2.45
PDA will change the nature of academic collections	3.53	3.59	3.44	3.62	3.45
PDA will produce unbalanced collections	3.04	3.07	2.84	3.24	3.03
PDA will produce polarized collection levels (introductory works vs. narrow research works)	2.98	3.07	2.84	3.25	2.80
PDA efforts should be limited to complementing regular collection development activities	3.88	3.98	3.88	3.85	3.77
DRM restrictions imposed on PDA collections and e-books collections in general are a serious concern	3.80	3.95	3.64	4.05	3.53
Collection development is an obsolete practice	1.62	1.63	1.76	1.57	1.52



Comments

Q4: Your institution currently has, or previously had, a PDA program.

D.

Occasionally when requested by ILL.

Usually by ILL.

M.

Faculty requests.

Rush requests for faculty.

Students contact faculty members to place orders.

e-form for requesting books is in the web page.

B.

Faculty can request titles for purchase.

A.

Q5: If your institution has, or is considering to have, a PDA program, how important are the following factors in selecting a PDA vendor/publisher?

D.

Stock available by publishers.

M.

B.

Speed of delivery

A.

Q9: Your own professional concerns about and expectations about PDA.

D.

PDA could be a solution for libraries with small book budgets.

PDA can be used in small scale with a mediated system in place.

PDA polarized collections of subject areas.

Questions 3-5 are too speculative,

PDA is an abrogation of responsibility of collection development librarians. Patrons are interested only in getting the book they need now.

Some limits need to be established so duplications are avoided and collections do not become unbalanced.

Our experience from 3 years shows that PDA based collections are not unbalanced and do not favor introductory works.

It's a very important practice that the needs of the curriculum and the students are met.

ALL undergraduates are underserved. Faculty order books that can only be used by the top upper-level students.

M.

With the proper parameters, PDA titles won't differ dramatically from librarian-selected titles, I expect they will circulate more.

PDA will not produce polarized collection levels. With the proper cross-section of user groups PDA can restore balance.

B.

Collection Development by subject specialist is essential to maintain a balanced collection, acquire quality materials in a subject area, disperse funds evenly among departments, and to support the curriculum.

A.

If only one copy of an item is purchased as a result of the PDA request, how will other users who need the same item be served?

I will not purchase an e-book that expire after a predetermined number of uses.

Q10: Other comments.

D.

PDA could be another tool of collection development when used appropriate.

I think it has great potential as a complement to traditional collection development -- at least until we know more about the profile of our patrons' needs and tastes.

I do not care much for the idea. It is damn expensive too.

The academic library where collections are meant to build upon the past scholarship for present and future needs. Our funds are being diverted from scholarly titles to titles that belong in public libraries or that should be purchased at the local Barnes and Noble.

Libraries need to carefully consider and plan the PDA program they develop. PDA can be a useful way to develop collections, but it can also be a waste of money and result in an unbalanced collection. Ongoing evaluation of the program also should be done to detect and stop problems before they escalate.

PDA could also result in many single use titles.

Biggest concern is loss of ILL.

M.

We utilize interlibrary loan requests and I-Share request information to assist with collection development. Otherwise, generally students can obtain needed resources within days via I-Share.

I worry the most about the unbalanced collections. PDA, I feel, should be used as perhaps a supplement to regular collection development. If there was a built in approval process that would be nice. If there was no approval process, our library would have bought 15 books last semester on a topic that a student used for his freshmen level composition paper.

B.

The best thing about selective PDA is that it will allow us to better gauge the needs of patrons and provide books that fit their needs. It compliments traditional collection development and the 2 together will result in a better collection overall.

I believe strongly that PDA should complement current collection development but not replace it. Having knowledge of the principles and philosophy of collection development, subject specialization, awareness of the curriculum, familiarity with publishers and being privy to upcoming courses and changes in departments (through faculty contacts and attending department meetings) is essential to providing material that will support scholarship at an academic institution.

A.

As the availability of collections for PDA improved and the technical problems (?) are worked out, we will make a decision.

Conclusion

In general, it can be concluded that according to the results of this survey, academic librarians in Illinois considered their collection development role is a very important function and will continue to be so; selection models like PDA when properly managed can effectively support the overall selection process.

The main issues can be summary as follow:

Collection development is an obsolete practice. No.

DRM restrictions imposed on PDA collections and e-books collections in general are a serious concern. Yes.

PDA efforts should be limited to complementing regular collection development activities. Yes.

Library purchases every title selected by patrons. No.

Library uses (or will use) a PDA librarian mediated selection process. Yes.

Quality of content as criteria for selection. Very high concern.

Digital Rights Management (DRM) restrictions. Very high concern.

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